

WEST MIDLANDSFIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
COLLABORATION AND TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE

15th JANUARY 2024

1. SERIOUS VIOLENCE DUTY

Report of the Clerk to the Authority

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1. THAT Members note the content of this report regarding the update on the Serious Violence Duty.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide the Collaboration and Transformation Committee with an update on the Serious Violence Duty and how West Midlands Fire Service are meeting its statutory obligations.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. The Serious Violence Duty was created as part of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. It came into force on 31 January 2023 and applies to a range of public sector bodies including all fire and rescue authorities. Accompanying Statutory Guidance was published in December 2022.
- 3.2. The duty is designed to drive a multi-agency, collaborative approach to tackling and preventing serious violence in all its forms. It requires police, fire and rescue services, Integrated Care Boards, local health boards, local authorities, youth offending teams and probation services to prepare and implement a strategy for preventing and reducing serious violence in their area(s). Other relevant authorities, including prisons and schools, can be consulted as part of this process.

- 3.3. The three core elements of the duty are:
- 3.3.1. Understanding local issues – requiring partners to work together to establish a strategic needs assessment considering the drivers of violence and the communities most affected or at risk. This will include sharing relevant data.
 - 3.3.2. Preparation, publication and implementation of a strategy to prevent and reduce serious violence - Partners will be held accountable for any actions they are committed to within the strategy. The strategy may include considerations of joint funding.
 - 3.3.3. Review – Partners to regularly review whether the strategy remains fit for purpose (at least annually) and considering success against its aims.
- 3.4. Each local area must have in place a strategy by January 2024. The Home Office have three key success measures for the new duty:
- 3.4.1. A reduction in hospital admissions for assaults with a knife or sharp object and especially among those victims aged 25 and under;
 - 3.4.2. A reduction in knife-enabled serious violence and especially among those victims ages 25 and under;
 - 3.4.3. A reduction in all homicides and especially those that are non-domestic and among those victims aged under 25 involving knives.
- 3.5. Fire and rescue services are recognised as having a less central role in the partnership in both the statutory guidance and the government's own impact assessments. However, there are a number of areas where the statutory guidance suggested fire could contribute:
- 3.5.1. Fire and Rescue services have a tradition of engaging with local communities to promote fire safety as well as supporting citizenship, community cohesion and direct support to vulnerable individuals and communities.

- 3.5.2. Fire and Rescues work with children and young people, safeguarding as well as fire reduction strategies, such as the sectors work to reduce deliberate fires, should be recognised as part of the Duty.
- 3.5.3. Fire and Rescue Services should be supported to deliver trauma informed interventions, engagement activities and safety education to targeted children and young people which supports the personal development and social and emotional learning of the child to reduce their vulnerability and increase their resilience to reduce serious violence.
- 3.5.4. Fire and Rescue Services should continue to develop partnerships to support risk reduction services to those identified as vulnerable and at risk from exploitation or abuse.

4. **WEST MIDLANDS APPROACH**

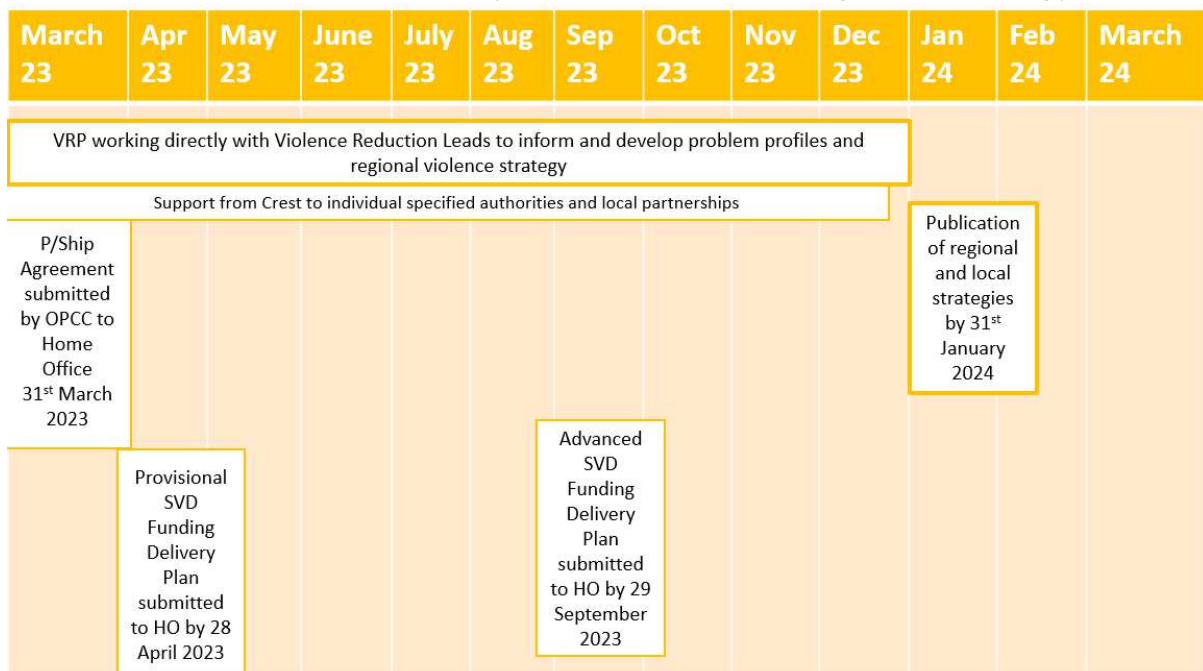
- 4.1. In the West Midlands, the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership is the vehicle for the production of the strategy. However, serious violence reduction sub-groups will also exist within each of the seven existing Community Safety Partnerships, which will contribute toward local “problem profiles”.
- 4.2. Although serious violence is not limited to physical violence against a person and can include domestic abuse, sexual offences, violence against property and threats of violence, the West Midlands strategy will be focused on homicide, gun and knife crime. It will specifically not include the wider category of violence against women and girls.
- 4.3. Funding has been provided by the Home Office which will be distributed by the Office of the Police and Commissioner. This funding has been provided for three years and is not a significant amount (just over £700,000 over the three years) but can be used to fund both labour and non-labour costs (such as interventions).
- 4.4. The Violence Reduction Partnership has responsibility for the governance of the allocation and management of these funds to local projects and providers.

5. **UPDATE**

5.1 **Timeline for Implementation**

The chart below gives the currently agreed timetable for the creation and implementation of the regional strategy by January 2024. The 7 local authority areas have been in the process of developing their local problem profiles that are being collated by the VRP to produce a regional strategy.

During August 2023, the VRP conducted a Public Insight Survey. The results of the survey will feed into the regional strategy.



5.2 **Regional Strategy**

The regional strategy is due to be published in January 2024. Early indications are that the priorities will be:

- Prevention
- Community and Youth Led approaches to violence reduction
- Building closer regional partnerships that support innovation
- Development of a West Midlands wide movement that aims for a violence free region
- Upscale delivery of trauma informed programmes in schools

5.3 **NFCC Serious Violence Briefing Note**

In September 2023 the NFCC published a Serious Violence Duty Briefing note. The briefing note is [attached](#) and aligns with the approach being taken by WMFS.

5.4 **WMFS Statutory Obligations**

5.4.1 Head of Prevention, Pete Wilson is the WMFS representative for the Serious Violence Duty and is part of the VRP strategic group that leads on the Duty. WMFS will be represented on the 7 local boards responsible for Serious Violence. This is mainly delegated through the local Community Safety Partnerships.

5.4.2 WMFS meets its statutory obligations under the Serious Violence duty by:

1. Supporting the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) with the development of the Regional Strategy.
2. Through the value the work that we already undertake towards reducing violence including:
 - Fire Cadets
 - Safe and Well visits
 - Safety Education activities
 - Undertaking our duties under Safeguarding, Prevent and Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery.
3. Proactively providing links into the community for VRP partner agencies through community events and open days and other means.

5.4.3 In addition, particular projects and initiatives undertaken by our local stations contribute directly to the serious violence duty. One example is the promotion of Bleed Kits led by WM Russ Edwards Purple Watch at Ladywood FS. This initiative provides ongoing support to the Daniel Baird Foundation, enhancing the roll-out of community bleed kits across Birmingham.

6. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

As this paper is to note and does not involve a change in WMFS policy, no initial Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken. There is an existing government impact assessment undertaken as part of the legislative process to introduce the duty, [which can be read here](#).

7. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The new Duty applied to West Midlands Fire Service as of 31 January 2023. We are legally required, alongside our partners, to have created a regional serious violence strategy by January 2024.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. There will be resources associated with meeting the requirements of the duty, mostly in terms of staff time. This will vary depending on the level of involvement WMFS are expected to have both in terms of the regional strategy and via CSP sub-groups.
- 8.2. Some central funding has been provided to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for a three year period to support the implementation of the duty. This will include funds for either staff time or to support interventions. WMFS will be able to bid for a portion of this funding.

9. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications associated with this paper.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Serious Violence Duty: Preventing and reducing serious violence
Statutory Guidance for responsible authorities](#)

[Serious Violence Duty: Impact Assessment](#)

The contact for this report is Pete Wilson, Head of Prevention.

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